



TIMES-PICAYUNE COLUMN – June 1, 2008

Contact: Emily Miller

Phone: 985.892.3216 ext. 23

E-mail: emily@sttammanycommerce.org

There is strength in numbers. In St. Tammany Parish we are aware of this truth and put it into practice last week during a visit to the state capitol in Baton Rouge, together with business and elected leadership from the parishes of Livingston, Tangipahoa and Washington, for our annual collaborative event, “North Shore Focus.”

Six years ago our chamber was a leader in planning the first annual event designed to draw attention to our region of the state. In previous years other regions including greater Monroe, Shreveport-Bossier and Lake Charles had hosted an annual event or “day at the legislature.” As our population and business interests grew, our time had come to join these ranks. It was time to inform elected officials from other areas of the state about new issues facing St. Tammany and other parishes on the north shore. Our issues were and still are today primarily relative to our significant population growth and resulting infrastructure needs. “Southern Nights” was born, and a grand event on the lawn of the governor’s mansion complete with food from some of our finest area restaurants and live entertainment took place for three years.

While serious introductions were made and conversations were held with the governor, house and senate leadership, this primarily social event on the lawn eventually moved to the more formal business setting provided in the Capitol Rotunda. The Rotunda location enabled our business and elected leaders to meet a larger number of senators and representatives from other regions of the state, not just our own north shore delegation, as they made their way from committee meetings on to the floor of the house and senate. This year we gave the event a new name, “North Shore Focus.” The name clearly identifies the goal we wish to accomplish the day of the event—we want legislators and other state governmental leaders to focus on north shore issues.

A main driver of the event is the staff of the Southeastern Louisiana University Alumni Association. Executive Director Kathy Pittman ensures we have a great display and coordinates the efforts of the participating chambers to achieve the ultimate goal.

None of the chambers of commerce could pull off the effort alone. All of our collective members get a better result by our staffs’ working together.

Again, there is strength in numbers. Together, we are stronger. We envision that “North Shore Focus” is here to stay, and look forward to working with our regional partners on this effort again in the years to come.

###

David Guzan is the St. Tammany West Chamber of Commerce’s 2008 Chairman of the Board and CEO of Fairway Medical Center. He can be contacted at info@sttammanycommerce.org.

Cut line for picture 6327:

Pictured from left are David Guzan of Fairway Medical Center; Jean Champagne of Krebs, LaSalle, LeMieux Consultants; Michele Avery of LaPorte, Sehrt, Romig & Hand; Allen Churchill of F. Kirby Newburger Investments; State Representative John Schroder; and Marty Mayer of Stirling Properties.